

T H E C L E V E L A N D M U S E U M O F A R T

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YUAN DYNASTY RENAISSANCE SET FOR CLEVELAND MUSEUM

More than 300 works of art from the Yüan dynasty (1279-1368 A.D.) will be shown at The Cleveland Museum of Art October 2 in a major exhibition, CHINESE ART UNDER THE MONGOLS. Never before has Yüan art been the subject of specific scrutiny and presentation, despite the fact that this ninety-year period was one of the most creative and productive in Chinese cultural history.

Assembled by Dr. Sherman E. Lee, the Museum's Director, and Wai-kam Ho, Curator of Oriental Art, the exhibition contains 306 works, all documented and illustrated in an accompanying catalog with text by Dr. Lee and Mr. Ho. Some works are being shown publicly for the first time. Included are paintings, calligraphy, sculpture, ceramics, wood block prints, silver and metal work, lacquer, jade, ivory, and textiles. The objects come from 72 public and private collections in Europe, Asia and the United States; they make up one of the largest and most comprehensive exhibitions ever held at Cleveland. Chinese Art Under the Mongols is the institution's first exhibition of Chinese Art since Dr. Lee became director in 1958.

Assisting in documentation for the exhibition and catalog were Mr. Tung Wu from the National Palace Museum of Taiwan; Mr. Stanislaw Czuma, a Ford Foundation interne at the museum; and Mr. Martin Lerner, Assistant Curator of Oriental Art at Cleveland.

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Political life in the Yüan period was controlled by the Mongols, but the art of the time remained stubbornly Chinese. The importance of the period lay in its power to change the nature of Chinese art, bringing about striking innovations in porcelain, lacquer and painting; at the same time the dynasty's artists forged the aesthetic standards for its well-known Ming and Ch'ing successors.

The art of the Yüan period has been neglected, Dr. Lee points out, because the dynasty was short-lived unlike the other Chinese dynasties. The Yüan period, moreover, was foreign-dominated and therefore somewhat neglected by Chinese historians; it became an artistic limbo into which connoisseur and archaeologist dumped misunderstood and unclassifiable works. However, shortly after World War II American Orientalists, following an interest in Chinese painting, re-evaluated the Yüan years where the rules for the "literary man's painting" (wen-jen-hua) had been established. Now, finally, Yüan art is exhibited in quantitative and qualitative terms which will permit a genuine comparative evaluation as well as a deeper appreciation than has heretofore been possible.

The Cleveland exhibition's raison d'être is to increase the attention given this neglected period and to fulfill a plan "long dreamed of and passionately desired by those responsible for its organization".

The exhibition closes November 24. The American loans (about one-third of the collection) will travel to New York City and will appear in exhibition at Asia House January 9 through March 2, 1969.